



WORK READINESS OF MANAGEMENT STUDENTS: THE EFFECTS OF SOFT SKILLS, MOTIVATION, AND PARENTAL ROLE

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Abstract

This study examines the effects of soft skills, motivation, and parental role on students' work readiness. An explanatory quantitative approach was employed, involving students from the 2021 cohort of the Management Study Program at ITEBIS PGRI Dewantara Jombang. Data were collected through a questionnaire survey and analyzed to determine the relationships among the variables under investigation. The findings indicate that soft skills, motivation, and parental role significantly affect students' work readiness. Among these variables, motivation emerged as the most dominant factor in explaining work readiness. These findings underscore that students' work readiness is shaped not only by non-technical competencies, but also by internal drive for self-development and family support in preparing for future careers. Accordingly, this study highlights the importance of strengthening soft skills, enhancing motivation, and encouraging parental involvement as part of higher education strategies to support students' work readiness prior to graduation.

Keywords: soft skills, motivation, parental role, work readiness, management students major

A. INTRODUCTION

Work readiness among university students has become an increasingly central issue in higher education because graduates' success is no longer determined solely by academic mastery, but also by their ability to adapt to the complex, dynamic, and competitive demands of the labor market. In the transition from higher education to employment, students are expected not merely to be ready to graduate, but also to be ready to work, in the sense of possessing adequate competencies, career orientation, and psychological capacity to enter professional environments. George and Paul (2024) show that students' competencies are closely associated with career preparedness and ultimately shape their perceptions of employability. This suggests that work readiness is not an automatic outcome of completing a degree, but rather the result of a sustained process of individual capacity-building and contextual support throughout higher education.

In the international literature, work readiness is often discussed in relation to employability, career preparedness, and school-to-work transition readiness. Ma and Bennett (2024) found that human capital, social capital, career management behavior, protean career orientation, and labor market conditions are important predictors of perceived employability. Similarly, Okolie (2022) showed that work placement learning is positively associated with students' readiness for the school-to-work transition, both directly and through the mediating roles of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and perceived employability. These findings confirm that work readiness is multidimensional, as it is shaped by competencies, self-beliefs, career behaviors, and environmental support that facilitate the transition into employment.

One of the factors most consistently linked to work readiness is soft skills. In employability research, soft skills refer to a set of non-technical competencies such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, problem-solving, leadership, and self-management that enable graduates to function effectively in workplace settings. Tushar and Sooraksa

(2023), through a semi-systematic review of twenty-first-century workplace skills, found that employers consistently prioritize communication, problem-solving, interpersonal skills, adaptability, and self-management as key competencies among new graduates. At the intervention level, Orih et al. (2024) demonstrated that soft skill development programs embedded in curricula contribute positively to employability skills, teamwork, leadership, communication, and career readiness. Thus, soft skills may be understood as an essential bridge between academic competence and the practical demands of the workplace.

For management students major, the importance of soft skills is particularly pronounced because the occupational fields they are likely to enter require intensive interaction, coordination, decision-making, and flexibility in responding to change. Work readiness in this group cannot be explained solely by mastery of management theory, but also by the ability to build relationships, manage conflict, communicate ideas, and display professional behavior. Research on the influence of soft skills on work readiness is therefore highly relevant, especially given the continuing criticism that higher education institutions have not fully succeeded in preparing graduates in accordance with labor market expectations.

In addition to soft skills, motivation constitutes an important personal factor in explaining students' work readiness. Motivation drives students to develop themselves, set career goals, sustain effort, and prepare for both opportunities and challenges in the workplace. From the perspectives of educational psychology and career development, students with high motivation tend to demonstrate stronger learning engagement, clearer future orientation, and greater initiative in actively preparing for their careers. Li et al. (2022) found that achievement motivation positively affects students' employability, both directly and through self-efficacy and academic performance. Likewise, Ma et al. (2024) reported that future work self is positively associated with undergraduate employability, indicating that future orientation and work-related motivation are important drivers of career readiness formation.

Another important factor is parental role. Within the frameworks of Social Cognitive Career Theory and Career Construction Theory, parents are regarded as a source of contextual support that can influence career beliefs, proactive behavior, and students' adaptive readiness for future work. Wang et al. (2023) found that career-related parental support affects vocational students' proactive career behavior through career adaptability. This finding is reinforced by Zeng et al. (2023), who showed that parental career support plays an important role in enhancing career adaptability through resilience and hope. Furthermore, Feng et al. (2024) demonstrated that parental behavior characterized by high support, high involvement, and low interference represents the most conducive condition for the development of students' career adaptability.

Although the relationships among soft skills, motivation, parental support, and work readiness have been widely discussed, important research gaps remain. First, much of the previous research has focused on employability, career adaptability, or proactive career behavior, while studies that explicitly position students' work readiness as the main variable remain relatively limited. Second, many studies have examined these factors separately, even though in practice work readiness is likely shaped by the simultaneous interaction of personal and social factors. Third, the context of management students major in regional private higher education institutions remains underrepresented in the literature, despite the distinct challenges such students may face in preparing for labor market entry.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study is grounded in the assumption that students with stronger soft skills are more prepared to enter the workforce because they possess more mature interpersonal and professional competencies. Students with higher motivation are also expected to have clearer career orientation and stronger readiness for entering the labor market. Meanwhile, students who receive positive support from their

parents are likely to exhibit greater career confidence and work readiness. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the effects of soft skills, motivation, and parental role on the work readiness of students from the 2021 cohort of the Management Study Program at ITEBIS PGRI Dewantara Jombang.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Work Readiness of University Students

Work readiness refers to a condition in which individuals possess the capabilities, attitudes, beliefs, and orientation required to enter and adjust to the world of work. In higher education, work readiness is not limited to academic knowledge, but also encompasses psychological readiness, interpersonal competence, career orientation, and the capacity to respond effectively to professional demands.

Contemporary scholarship often relates work readiness to the concepts of employability, career preparedness, and school-to-work transition readiness. George and Paul (2024) demonstrated that students' competencies are closely associated with career preparedness and perceived employability. Similarly, Ma and Bennett (2024) emphasized that human capital, social capital, career management behavior, and career orientation contribute to perceived graduate employability. Okolie (2022) also showed that learning experiences relevant to the workplace are positively associated with readiness for the school-to-work transition.

In this study, work readiness is positioned as the dependent variable because it represents an outcome influenced by both personal and social factors. Students with stronger non-technical skills, higher motivation, and more positive family support are expected to demonstrate more mature work readiness.

2. Soft Skills and Work Readiness

Soft skills refer to a set of non-technical abilities that enable individuals to interact, adapt, collaborate, and solve problems effectively in social and professional environments. In the student context, soft skills include communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, self-management, and adaptability.

The importance of soft skills in work readiness has been repeatedly emphasized in the employability literature. Tushar and Sooraksa (2023) found that communication, problem-solving, interpersonal skills, self-management, and adaptability are among the competencies most demanded in the twenty-first-century workplace. Orih et al. (2024) further showed that curricular interventions aimed at developing soft skills positively contribute to employability skills and career readiness.

For management students major, soft skills are particularly relevant because their future fields of employment require communication, coordination, leadership, and decision-making abilities. Students with stronger soft skills are therefore more likely to adapt successfully to workplace demands.

H₁: Soft skills have a positive and significant effect on students' work readiness.

3. Motivation and Work Readiness

Motivation refers to the internal drive that moves individuals to pursue goals, sustain effort, and continue developing themselves. In the student context, motivation plays an important role in shaping learning orientation, willingness to develop competence, and readiness to prepare actively for a career.

Li et al. (2022) found that achievement motivation positively affects students' employability, both directly and through self-efficacy and academic performance. Likewise, Ma et al. (2024) showed that future work self is positively associated with undergraduate employability, indicating that motivation and future orientation play an important role in shaping career readiness.

When linked specifically to work readiness, students with higher motivation are more likely to seek out experiences, enhance their competencies, and develop professional preparedness proactively.

H₂: Motivation has a positive and significant effect on students' work readiness.

4. Parental Role and Work Readiness

Parental role refers to the form of social support provided by parents in their children's academic and career development processes. In the context of university students, parental role may take the form of emotional support, guidance, moral encouragement, provision of resources, and support related to career exploration and planning.

Empirical evidence supports the importance of parental role in this regard. Wang et al. (2023) found that career-related parental support affects vocational students' proactive career behavior through career adaptability. Zeng et al. (2023) likewise showed that parental career support enhances career adaptability through resilience and hope. Feng et al. (2024) further demonstrated that parental behavior characterized by high support, high involvement, and low interference most strongly supports the development of students' career adaptability.

In the Indonesian context, parental role carries particular importance because the family often serves as the primary source of emotional support, moral guidance, and career-related decision-making.

H₃: Parental role has a positive and significant effect on students' work readiness.

C. METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design. The quantitative approach was selected because the study aimed to examine the measurable effects of soft skills, motivation, and parental role on students' work readiness. The study was conducted among students from the 2021 cohort of the Management Study Program at ITEBIS PGRI Dewantara Jombang.

The population consisted of 222 students, while the sample comprised 100 respondents. The sampling technique used was accidental sampling, in which respondents were selected based on accessibility and their suitability for the research criteria. Respondents were limited to active students from the 2021 cohort of the Management Study Program who were willing to complete the questionnaire at the time of data collection.

Primary data were gathered through a closed-ended questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The instrument was used to measure respondents' perceptions of soft skills, motivation, parental role, and work readiness.

This study involved three independent variables and one dependent variable. The first independent variable was soft skills (X_1), measured through indicators of communication ability, teamwork, creative and critical thinking, time management, and leadership. The second independent variable was motivation (X_2), measured through indicators of achievement drive, desire for advancement, commitment to goal attainment, interest in entering the workforce, and enthusiasm for self-development. The third independent variable was parental role (X_3), measured through indicators of emotional support, career guidance, parental encouragement, parental concern for students' future, and parental involvement in career decision-making.

The dependent variable was work readiness (Y), defined as the condition in which students are prepared to enter the workforce in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Indicators of work readiness included mental readiness, emotional readiness, adaptability, self-confidence, and readiness to face workplace challenges. Data analysis was conducted

through descriptive analysis, instrument quality testing, classical assumption testing, and multiple linear regression using SPSS.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Results

This study involved 100 respondents from the 2021 cohort of the Management Study Program at ITEBIS PGRI Dewantara Jombang. The analysis was conducted to examine the effects of soft skills, motivation, and parental role on students' work readiness. Before testing the hypotheses, the regression model was first evaluated through the classical assumption tests to ensure that the model was statistically appropriate for further analysis.

The normality test indicated that the points on the normal probability plot followed the diagonal line, suggesting that the residuals were normally distributed. The heteroscedasticity test also showed that the points on the scatterplot were randomly distributed and did not form a specific pattern, indicating the absence of heteroscedasticity. In addition, the multicollinearity test demonstrated that all independent variables had tolerance values above 0.10 and variance inflation factor (VIF) values below 10, which indicates that no multicollinearity problem was present. The Durbin-Watson value of 1.692 further suggests that the regression model did not suffer from autocorrelation. Taken together, these findings confirm that the model satisfied the required assumptions for hypothesis testing.

Table 1. Classical Assumption Test Results

Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Interpretation
Soft skills	0.663	1.509	No multicollinearity
Motivation	0.693	1.442	No multicollinearity
Parental role	0.663	1.508	No multicollinearity

Table 2. Additional Model Diagnostic

Indicator	Value
Durbin-Watson	1.692

The results of the partial hypothesis testing indicate that all independent variables had positive and significant effects on work readiness. Soft skills had a regression coefficient (B) of 0.506, a t-value of 4.956, and a significance value of 0.001. This indicates that an increase in soft skills was associated with an increase in students' work readiness, and that this relationship was statistically significant. Motivation had a coefficient of 0.472, a t-value of 5.013, and a significance value of 0.001. Although its unstandardized coefficient was slightly lower than that of soft skills, motivation produced the highest t-value, indicating that it was the strongest predictor statistically in the model. Meanwhile, parental role had a coefficient of 0.218, a t-value of 2.847, and a significance value of 0.005, which also confirms a positive and significant effect, albeit with a relatively smaller contribution than the other predictors.

Table 3. Partial Hypothesis Testing Results

Variable	B	t	Sig.	Decision
Soft skills	0.506	4.956	0.001	H1 accepted
Motivation	0.472	5.013	0.001	H2 accepted
Parental role	0.218	2.847	0.005	H3 accepted

Furthermore, the Adjusted R Square value of 0.618 indicates that 61.8% of the variance in students' work readiness can be explained jointly by soft skills, motivation, and parental role. The remaining 38.2% is attributable to other variables outside the scope of the present model. This result suggests that the model has relatively strong explanatory power in accounting for students' work readiness.

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination

Indicator	Value
Adjusted R Square	0.618

Overall, the results demonstrate that the three independent variables are statistically meaningful predictors of work readiness. Among them, motivation emerged as the most dominant factor in statistical terms, followed by soft skills and parental role.

2. Discussion

The first finding shows that soft skills have a positive and significant effect on students' work readiness. This supports the argument advanced in the literature that work readiness is shaped not only by academic knowledge, but also by non-technical competencies that enable students to interact, adapt, and function effectively in professional settings. In the international literature, Tushar and Sooraksa (2023) identify communication, problem-solving, interpersonal skills, adaptability, and self-management as central components of twenty-first-century employability. This result is also consistent with Orih et al. (2024), who demonstrate that soft skill development interventions in educational contexts positively contribute to employability skills and career readiness.

The second finding indicates that motivation has a positive and significant effect on work readiness and emerges as the most dominant variable in the model. Theoretically, this is consistent with the view that motivation functions as an internal drive that encourages students to set goals, develop their capacities, and prepare actively for their future careers. Li et al. (2022) found that achievement motivation positively affects employability, whereas Ma et al. (2024) showed that future work self is positively related to undergraduate employability. This finding suggests that work readiness is shaped not only by the competencies students possess, but also by the strength of their internal drive to grow and prepare for the world of work.

The third finding shows that parental role has a positive and significant effect on students' work readiness. This result is consistent with Social Cognitive Career Theory and Career Construction Theory, both of which position family support as an important contextual factor in shaping career beliefs and proactive career behavior. Wang et al. (2023), Zeng et al. (2023), and Feng et al. (2024) all show that parental career support contributes positively to students' career adaptability and proactive career behavior. The present study therefore confirms that students' work readiness is also shaped by family support that helps them feel more confident and more prepared to face their professional future.

Overall, the findings indicate that students' work readiness is shaped by a combination of personal and social factors. Soft skills provide non-technical capacity, motivation provides internal drive, and parental role provides contextual support. Together, these variables explain a substantial proportion of the variance in students' work readiness. The implication is that higher education institutions should not rely solely on academic instruction, but must also strengthen soft skills, cultivate student motivation, and build constructive synergy with families as part of the broader process of preparing students for employment.

E. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that soft skills, motivation, and parental role have positive and significant effects on the work readiness of students from the 2021 cohort of the Management Study Program at ITEBIS PGRI Dewantara Jombang. These findings indicate that students' work readiness is shaped not only by mastery of non-technical skills, but also by internal drive for self-development and social support from the family. Among the three variables examined, motivation emerged as the most dominant factor affecting work readiness. This finding underscores that students who possess achievement drive, future orientation, and a

strong desire to enter the workforce are more likely to be ready to face professional demands. Soft skills enhance readiness through communication, teamwork, and adaptability, whereas parental role provides emotional support and guidance that help students prepare for their future careers.

Based on these findings, students are advised to take a more active role in developing their soft skills and maintaining motivation as they prepare to enter the labor market. Students should not focus solely on academic achievement, but should also cultivate communication, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving skills through organizational activities, training programs, internships, and field experience. In addition, students should develop a clear career orientation from an early stage so that they can prepare for their future more purposefully.

For future research, it is recommended that the respondent base be expanded to include more than one study program or higher education institution in order to improve the generalizability of the findings. Future studies may also incorporate other variables that potentially influence work readiness, such as self-efficacy, organizational experience, internship experience, employability skills, and institutional support. In addition, mixed-methods or qualitative approaches may be considered to obtain a deeper understanding of how students build work readiness within the context of higher education.

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